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The Southern California Clapper Rail Breeding on Fresh Water

BY G. WILLETT

SO far as I know the Southern California clapper rail (*Rallus levipes*) has been heretofore considered to inhabit only the salt marshes of the coast. I was therefore much surprised to flush a clapper rail from a small bunch of reeds on the edge of Nigger Slough, Los Angeles County, on May 29, 1906. On examining the bunch of reeds, which were growing in about 3 inches of water, I discovered a nest containing 3 fresh eggs undoubtedly of this species.

I left them and did not return until the evening of June 14. Approaching the nest carefully I succeeded in getting within about 8 feet of it before the bird flushed. She floundered thru the grass for about 30 feet and then took wing flying across the slough and was not again seen.

The nest contained nine eggs of which eight were about two-thirds incubated while the other was fresh or infertile. The nest and eggs, which are now in my collection, are typical of the species. The nest is a very loose affair, the foundation being composed of decayed tules and reeds and the upper part, containing the cavity, of broken bits of tule stalks. It measures 11 by 7 inches on the outside, with the cavity 5 by $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

The eggs are creamy white spotted and blotched with umber and lavender, principally around the large end, the lavender markings having the appearance of being beneath the surface of the shell. The eggs measure: 1.57x1.15; 1.56x1.16; 1.61x1.14; 1.58x1.12; 1.61x1.14; 1.60x1.12; 1.59x1.15; 1.58x1.13; and 1.61x1.14.

Mr. O. W. Howard informs me that he has seen the clapper rail at Nigger Slough previously. I would like to know whether anyone else has found this species breeding on fresh water, or if this case may be regarded as exceptional.

Los Angeles, Cal.

Up the Yellowstone on a Pinto

BY GERARD ALAN ABBOTT

DURING my oological pursuits the shore-birds have always proved most fascinating. The prolonged, but extensive migrations, the deception displayed while nidification is in progress, and the unlimited variation of their exquisitely-marked eggs are notable characteristics.

Having become intimately acquainted with the Wilson phalarope, Bartramian sandpiper, and American woodcock, I cherished a desire to meet the long-billed curlew, a king among waders, in his natural elements.

Two other species, the magnificent ferruginous rough-leg and the sage-cock, prince of the grouse tribe, were of unusual interest to me. With visions of this nature I was lured to the foothills along the Yellowstone River, in Montana.

On the morning of May 18, 1906, I left camp, astride a pinto pony, and headed for Valley Creek. Curlews were whistling over the grassy slopes and the western meadow and desert horned larks abounded everywhere.

The season had been dry and the vegetation was short and stunted. I had no difficulty (from my elevated position on the pinto) in detecting nests of both larks, as the parent birds skulked from their treasures.

I descended into the creek bottoms among the willows, where I found my first magpie nests. These birds were seen about every sheep-herder's camp, subsisting on carrion.

After scanning the sides of a distant range thru my field glasses, I ascended the hills in that direction. As my pony was prancing about, a curlew arose ten feet away, and swiftly winged her course low over the prairie, half a mile in absolute silence. I sprang from my saddle and found a handsome fresh set resting with their points together in a slight cavity lined with bits of grass. In the meantime the parent approached from the opposite direction, uttering her distressing notes of alarm.

These eggs are of the dark green type, shaped long and narrow, and quite different from other specimens of "the sicklebill" which I possess.

An hour or two later while riding thru the sage brush, I espied a sage hen squatting under a bush in typical woodcock fashion, trusting by her protective coloration to escape attention. She permitted close inspection before leaving her nest, revealing nine eggs, incubation one-half.

Five miles away several cottonwoods were growing between rocky ledges. As I neared the place a beautiful fawn-colored hawk sailed from a huge nest composed of dead limbs and buffalo chips. An easy climb—and I was looking down on three well-blotched eggs of the ferruginous rough-leg.

It was getting late in the afternoon so I started for the ranch. In a deep gulch between two divides were several tall poplars; two contained nests. On one the head and tail of a Swainson hawk were clearly visible, outlined against the blue sky. The nest held one freshly laid egg, which I left undisturbed.

Camp was reached in time for supper, and tho a trifle saddle-sore, I felt amply rewarded for my first day's work up the Yellowstone.

Chicago, Illinois.

The Bell Sparrow

BY WRIGHT M. PIERCE

THIS little sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*) is very numerous about here, frequenting the brush-covered fields and low foothills. He seems to prefer the low brush, especially that which grows from one to three feet high, tho he is found, but less abundantly, in the higher sage and thicker brush. This sparrow is a resident about here and can be found at any time in his chosen haunts either on a rainy day in January or on a hot sultry one in July.

I have found many nests of this bird and do not consider them difficult to locate. The method I use is to walk along in the low brush until the bird is startled from the nest, or to simply look in bunches of low brush near which I have located a pair of the birds. In this way I have found as many as half a dozen different nests in an afternoon.

The breeding season commences in early April and continues certainly as late as June. It is at its height during the last week of April and in early May. My earliest set was taken on April 6, near Claremont, and contained four eggs, slightly incubated. On May 18, also near Claremont, I found a set of four, incubation advanced.

The nest is generally placed about a foot up in some small bush, usually being